

Jackson-Washington State Forest: A Brief History

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

The following thesis provides a brief history of Jackson-Washington State Forest in Brownstown, Indiana, from its establishment in 1931 to the present day (April, 2015). The following pages describe the forest's relationship with the CCC, its historic structures, its transition into a recreation area, and its interaction with wider conservation movements, state- and nationwide. This thesis will accompany similar papers, also written by Ball State Honors students, about Indiana's eleven other state forests, forming the first-ever, written history of the Indiana state forests.

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Throughout the 1920s, more than fifteen years after the establishment of Indiana's first state forest in Clark County, the state was continuing to look for land it could conserve. Shortly after the establishment of Morgan-Monroe State Forest in 1929, the Indiana Department of Conservation acquired land in Jackson County, near Brownstown, Indiana, to begin its third state forest.¹ Jackson County State Forest (eventually known as Jackson-Washington State Forest) was established in 1931 on a tract of 600 acres of land that was deemed sub-marginal, or too eroded and damaged by forest fires to be successful agriculturally.² With a little bit of work, however, this sub-marginal land could be reforested. And in the years to come, with the help of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Indiana Division of Forestry developed a thriving and well-managed public forest in Jackson and Washington Counties.

The Civilian Conservation Corps

Jackson County State Forest saw rapid growth in land acquisition its first few years. Within the forest's first month or so, its acreage nearly doubled to 1,200 acres. By August of 1935, four years after its establishment, the forest had expanded from its original 600 acres to over 5,000.³ In addition to outward expansion, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was responsible for the construction of nearly all facilities and infrastructure within the property, as virtually none existed prior to the CCC's arrival.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was developed as a part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal Act, only a few years after Indiana established Jackson County State

¹ Glory-June Greiff, "New Deal Work Projects on Indiana State Lands," n.d.

² "Jackson County State Forest is Visited by Newspaper Editors," *Outdoor Indiana*, August 1935, 16 & 24.

³ Ibid.

Forest. Its aim was to counteract the Great Depression by putting unemployed men back to work, specifically in conservation projects for the government. One such group, Company 1556 (Figure 1), was stationed at Jackson County State Forest. Membership for this particular company was limited to veterans only, many of whom had been out of work since the beginning of the Great Depression. Veterans had received bonuses in the form of certificates for their military service in 1924, but these certificates couldn't be redeemed until 1945. After great protest from veterans in Washington, who demanded compensation for their work, President Roosevelt signed an executive order to enroll 25,000 World War I veterans into the CCC program in May 1933. Less than two months later, CCC Company 1556's first members enrolled in the program on July 1, 1933.⁴



Figure 1, "CCC 1556's First Members"

Source: Civilian Conservation Corps Company 1556, 1937

⁴ "Picture No. 1," photograph, 1936.; Joseph M. Speakman, "Into the Woods: The First Year of the Civilian Conservation Corps," *Prologue Magazine*, Fall 2006, <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2006/fall/ccc.html> (March 14, 2015).



Figure 2, "Picture No. 1"

Source: Civilian Conservation Corps Company 1556, 1936

The Civilian Conservation Corps was largely responsible for the development of the forest's facilities, as was the case for many state forests and parks across the nation. Among Company 1556's development projects were many trails and roads, a fire tower, two shelter houses (Figure 3), two lakes, comfort stations, and a three-story barn (Figure 4), many of which still remain on the property in 2015.⁵ CCC members also operated a sawmill in the forest, so many of the structures that were built in these years were constructed of mature timber from within the forest's own borders.⁶

⁵ "Jackson County State Forest is Visited by Newspaper Editors," 16 & 24.

⁶ "Jackson County State Forest Development Example of Indiana Program," *Outdoor Indiana*, December 1934, 4.



Figure 3, "Shelter House"

Source: "Development of State Forest," 1937.



Figure 4, "Service Building"

Source: "Development of State Forest," 1937.

The day to day lives of Company 1556's members at Jackson County State Forest were well documented in the Company's monthly newsletter, *The Blatter*, which published everything from company news, to knock-knock jokes, to members' latest carpentry projects. In the March/April 1938 edition of *The Blatter*, the writers proudly share that, "As a result of the inspection in March, Company 1556 was again rated Superior....and we feel sure, if the Generals' favorable impression of the camp is a fair criterion, that the April list of superior camps will again include the Brownstown Veterans' Camp." Superior was the highest rating possible and Company 1556 was receiving it for the ninth time since its inception.⁷

⁷ C.C.C. Veteran Co. 1556, "Camp Rates Superior," *The Blatter*, March & April 1938.

Company 1556 continued constructing and improving facilities at Jackson County State Forest for many years until the dissolution of the Civilian Conservation Corps as a national program in 1942. With new jobs opening up because of the impending Second World War, the CCC was struggling to retain members. Membership, nationwide, had decreased from 300,000 in 1940 to 200,000 in 1941. Public support was also waning at this point, as many citizens wanted their tax dollars to be spent on defense rather than a conservation-focused unemployment program. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, federal projects that were not associated with the war were no longer a priority and Congress officially stopped funding the Civilian Conservation Corps in June 1942.⁸ However, many camp operations continued on for a few months following this, which was likely the case for Company 1556.

Skyline Drive Fire Tower

One of the forest's many surviving structures constructed by Company 1556 is a fire tower along what would become Skyline Drive that provides a lookout across the entire forest and surrounding land. Forest fire prevention was a growing issue nationwide during the 1930s and with the help of CCC members as firefighters and fire lookouts, fewer fires got out of control. The Indiana Division of Forestry especially stressed the importance of forest fire prevention under the leadership of State Forester Ralph F. Wilcox, who was appointed in Indiana in 1929. Wilcox "had come to Indiana from Pennsylvania and was well aware of the ravages of wild fire."⁹ He was likely surprised that there was only one fire

⁸ "CCC Brief History," *Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy*, http://www.ccclegacy.org/CCC_Brief_History.html

⁹ "IDNR—Division of Forestry, Fire Control," Accessed March 12, 2015, http://indianawildfire.com/word_documents/in_fire_law.htm.

tower in the state at the time (in Clark State Forest) and that Indiana had yet to be mapped topographically, meaning the prime areas to install fire towers—those with the highest elevation—were still unknown.

In Jackson County, specifically, forest fires had raged through the area for decades prior to the establishment of the state forest. Despite their devastating effects on the landscape, very few local people displayed concern or made an effort to prevent their spreading until the CCC days.¹⁰ The advent of fire lookout towers were vital to protecting this newly acquired land and were not an uncommon project for the CCC at the time.

Of two fire towers existing in Jackson County State Forest in the 1930s, only the tower along Skyline Drive (Figure 5) remains in 2015. It was built sometime between 1933, when Company 1556 was established, and 1935. The steel tower stands 90-feet tall at an elevation of 920 feet with a cabin at the top that measures seven by seven feet.¹¹ The tower was an especially big hit at an Open House hosted by the forest in June 1937, which attracted over a hundred vehicles for a tour of the grounds. Visitors ascended the fire tower and were struck by the views, looking south and east for fifty miles.¹² Remnants of a second tower's sandstone base can still be seen on Trail 1 in Jackson-Washington State Forest in 2015.¹³ This tower was constructed out of wood prior to the CCC era and it is estimated to have stood at 910 feet tall.¹⁴

¹⁰ Indiana Department of Conservation, *Jackson State Forest*, (Indiana Department of Conservation, Division of Forestry, Forestry Publication No. 1, 1948).

¹¹ Brad Schneck, interview by author, Brownstown, Indiana, March 6, 2015.

¹² "'Open House' at Jackson County State Forest Featured by Motor Tour to Points of Interest," *Outdoor Indiana*, July 1937, 30.

¹³ Schneck interview.

¹⁴ "Development of State Forest in Jackson County is Progressing," *Outdoor Indiana*, July 1937, 8-9 & 27.; Brad Schneck, "Jackson Washington State Forest – Lookout Tower," (lecture notes, Jackson-Washington State Forest, March 6, 2015).



Figure 5, "CCC Firetower"
Source: "Organization Formed," 1936.

Forest Fire Prevention Programs

In 1934, the Division of Forestry introduced the first coordinated fire prevention program in Indiana, which launched new fire training sessions, more fire towers, and better forest fire management. By 1936, the state had hired two trained foresters to collaborate with the U.S. Forest Service to develop plans for the prevention, detection, and suppression of forest fires in Indiana.¹⁵ Under this system, Indiana was divided into three forest districts: northern, southeastern, and southwestern. The southeastern district was

¹⁵ "IDNR—Division of Forestry, Fire Control."

headquartered in Jackson County State Forest itself, and covered the land south of U.S. Highway 40 and east of State Road 37.¹⁶

In this new forest fire-fighting plan, towermen who were stationed in the state's fire towers would communicate the location of any unusual smoke activity to the local forest fire wardens, stationed on the ground. Visitors can still see old American chestnut telephone poles in Jackson-Washington State Forest in 2015, which kept the towerman in communication with the wardens in Brownstown.¹⁷ In the 1940s and 1950s, these communication systems were upgraded, statewide, to two-way radios, which allowed more mobility for fire fighters on the ground. By 1957 Indiana proudly provided forty 2-way radios for fire prevention across the state.¹⁸

Throughout this time, the state also offered more and more training for fire fighters and towermen. Indiana even required a critical vision test for tower men, as eyesight was essential for the job. In such a test, an applicant would be taken outdoors and positioned several hundred feet away from a blackboard. He was then expected to spot a white dot measuring $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch in diameter on the blackboard from at least 450 feet away and identify on which end of the board it appeared.¹⁹

Forest officials continued to use Skyline Tower for fire prevention purposes until the mid-1970s, when aerial fire detection became the more effective means of preventing forest fires. Since then, Jackson-Washington State Forest has maintained the Skyline Drive Lookout Tower, as it is now known, as a public viewing point. On May 7, 1992, the tower

¹⁶ "Organization Formed to Lead Fight Against Forest Fires In Indiana." *Outdoor Indiana*, June 1936, 29-31.

¹⁷ Schneck, "Jackson Washington State Forest – Lookout Tower."

¹⁸ "IDNR—Division of Forestry, Fire Control."

¹⁹ Schneck, "Jackson Washington State Forest – Lookout Tower."

(Figure 6) became the second in the nation to be listed on the National Historic Lookout Register, which recognizes historic fire lookouts as a proud symbol of forest conservation across the country and seeks to protect them as pieces of history.²⁰



Figure 6, "Skyline Drive Tower"
 Source: "Jackson-Washington Tower," 1992.

Seventeen years later, in 2009, Skyline Drive Tower was disassembled for major repairs and restoration. Forest officials spent nearly \$9,000 sandblasting, repainting, and reassembling the structure, all while maintaining its historic qualities. Other adjustments included adding new safety fencing and wood flooring on the steps and platforms and replacing a few lower steel braces.²¹ In 2015, the Skyline Drive Lookout Tower remains a popular place to visit, offering an astounding view of the forest and Skyline Drive.

²⁰ "Jackson-Washington Tower Listed on National Register," *Outdoor Indiana*, July 1992, 7.; "National Historic Lookout Register," Accessed February 18, 2015, <http://www.nhlr.org>.

²¹ Schneck, "Jackson Washington State Forest – Lookout Tower."

Knob Lake

Sometime prior to August 1935, the CCC constructed Knob Lake, also known as Saw Mill Hollow Dam (Figure 7). The CCC had difficulties providing water to the forest's facilities and their camp, "as no well could be dug or drilled which would give an adequate supply for the service area and public use."²² In solution, they constructed a small dam creating Knob Lake, below which they installed a filtration system and pipelines to provide clean water to the picnic areas, service building, and other facilities.



Figure 7, "Saw Mill Hollow Lake"

Source: "Development of State Forest," 1937

Knob Lake Upper Picnic Area

The Knob Lake Upper Picnic Area is another CCC structure that remains in impeccable condition in 2015. This is in part because its historic value has been acknowledged through the National Register for Historic Places since December 1996 and forest officials have worked to maintain this historic value over the years (Figure 8). To the north of Knob Lake, this historic picnic area sits on a hillside among a grove of oak trees

²² "Development of State Forest in Jackson County is Progressing," 8-9 & 27.

and offers “a marvelously intact example of state forest recreational development by the Civilian Conservation Corps in Indiana.”²³



Figure 8, *CCC Picnic Area Plaque*
Source: Erin Silcox, 2015.

Of the many similar CCC picnic areas throughout the state, this area in particular has managed to retain its CCC workmanship traits since the time of its original construction in the 1930s. The area includes two sets of stone steps in the hillside that lead up to eighteen CCC-constructed stone and timber picnic tables and five stone fireplace ovens scattered throughout the grove (Figure 9). Although there is no distinct picnic shelter, there is one oven shelter constructed in the typical New Deal era style, with a two-sided stone fireplace

²³ United States Department of the Interior National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Picnic Area, Jackson State Forest, Glory-June Greiff, 96-1554, December 3, 1996, March 15, 2015,
<http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/nrhp/text/96001554.PDF>.

and a hipped roof (Figure 10). A timber water fountain shelter is the only other sheltered facility in the picnic area (Figure 11).²⁴



Figure 9, *Knob Lake Picnic Area 1*

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, 1996.



Figure 10, *Knob Lake Picnic Area 2*

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, 1996.

²⁴ Ibid.



Figure 11, *Knob Lake Picnic Area 3*

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, 1996.

Perhaps the most substantial construction within the Knob Lake Upper Picnic Area is the campfire ring, composed of a stone fireplace built into a circular stone bench, which surrounds another picnic table on top of a stone flooring (Figures 12 & 13). All of these structures very accurately exemplify the architectural style of the Indiana Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, particularly their workmanship in timber construction and stone masonry. There is also strong evidence that the oak trees throughout the picnic area are of the same age as the constructions themselves.²⁵

²⁵ Ibid.



Figure 12, *Knob Lake Picnic Area 4*

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, 1996.



Figure 13, *Knob Lake Campfire Ring*

Source: Silcox, 2015.

Museum Shelter

Unlike other CCC constructions, the museum shelter's history dates back prior to the establishment of Jackson-Washington State Forest. In the 1930s, timbers from an old cabin,

known as the Peters Cabin, were discovered near Vallonia, Indiana. It was said to date back to 1876 or earlier and was moved to the forest property to be protected. By June 1935, Company 1556 was restoring the structure and converting it into a museum to store historic information about Jackson County (Figure 14).²⁶ According to Schneck, after the restoration, “the front structure of the building was actually a log style and the rest of it had just normal stick framing built around it,” using the logs as beams.²⁷ The shelter faced so much vandalism as a museum that forest officials eventually converted it into a simple picnic shelter.²⁸ Later, an upstairs was added as well and a dormer and wings were installed around 1961.



Figure 14, *The Museum*

Source: “Development of State Forest,” 1937.

As of March 2015, officials at Jackson-Washington State Forest were in the middle of a reconstruction project of the museum shelter (Figure 15), as it had degraded to the point of being condemned. Upon beginning reconstruction, however, workers discovered that the cabin had a laid sandstone floor beneath the concrete flooring that had always been visible.

²⁶ David Pearson, “Indiana’s Skyline Drive: Jackson-Washington State Forest,” *Outdoor Indiana*, November 1976, 4-5.; Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, “New Deal Resources on Indiana State Lands,” Glory-June Greiff, 1996.

²⁷ Schneck interview.

²⁸ Pearson, “Indiana’s Skyline Drive,” 4-5.

After further investigation and deconstruction of the sandstone flooring, workers discovered that the CCC Company had originally restored the cabin/museum shelter in a cornerstone layout. This meant that included in the building's foundation was one particularly significant stone footing, engraved with the date of construction for future generations to discover. As Brad Schneck, property manager, tells it, "And then we flipped up an actual stone that was engraved '1934'."²⁹ This corresponded perfectly with a photo of the Cornerstone Laying Ceremony for the cabin, which took place on October 6, 1934 (Figure 16).³⁰ Today, this commemorative piece of engraved sandstone remains on display in the Jackson-Washington State Forest office building.



Figure 15, *Museum Reconstruction*

Source: Silcox, 2015.

²⁹ Schneck interview.

³⁰ Edwin J. Boley, *The First Documented History of Jackson County, Indiana, 1816-1976*. Vol. II. Seymour, Indiana: E.J. Boley, 1980, 139.



Figure 16, *Museum Cornerstone Laying*
Source: Boley, 1980.

Starve Hollow Lake

In addition to infrastructure development, Jackson County State Forest continued to expand its boundaries throughout this time. Land southwest of the original forest was acquired between 1935 and 1936 and would eventually become Starve Hollow State Recreation Area. By March 1937, a Works Progress Administration (WPA) group—separate from the CCC, but similar in nature—had set up a temporary camp in the forest to begin construction of a new lake, dam, and fish hatchery on this southern portion of the property. The dam and lake would be called Starve Hollow Lake and cover 172 acres and the fish hatchery, eventually to become Driftwood State Fish Hatchery, would cover twelve acres directly south of the lake.³¹ In addition to the WPA, the project took an enormous amount of collaboration between governmental agencies including the Indiana State Highway

³¹ Jackson County State Forest, *Jackson County State Forest: Brownstown, Indiana* [map], 2 inches=1 mile, March 12, 1937.; “Development of State Forest in Jackson County is Progressing,” 8-9 & 27.

Commission, the Department of Tests (which conducted experiments to decide the best types of soil to use), and the Indiana Divisions of Forestry, Engineering, Geology, and Fish and Game.³²

The primary purpose of constructing Starve Hollow (Figure 17) was to conserve water. The lake was designed to prevent the flooding of Starve Hollow Creek during the spring and to keep up the flow of water during droughts. It would raise the water table, improve tree growth within the forest, and increase summer moisture. The lake also provided many new recreational opportunities including fishing and boating.³³



Figure 17, *Starve Hollow Lake*

Source: Pearson, 1976.

By 1938, Jackson County State Forest spanned 3,547 acres and Starve Hollow Lake was finished. The lake was fed by natural springs and the constantly flowing Starve Hollow Creek and was beginning to be filled by January 1939. It surpassed the originally expected

³² "Starve Hollow Lake Will Make Needed Place for Fish and Game," *Outdoor Indiana*, March 1938, 6.

³³ *Ibid.*

surface area of 172 acres with a total of 200 acres, making it the largest manmade lake in Indiana at that time.³⁴ Starve Hollow Lake quickly became a huge attraction for local Jackson County residents and other Hoosiers throughout the state, offering recreational opportunities in conjunction with the state forest right next door.

Aquatic Herbicide Testing

More than a decade after its creation, in 1952, Starve Hollow Lake became subject to chemical treatment in an effort to study the effects of a new herbicide on the general Indiana water habitat. A “chemical inhibitor of certain forms of aquatic plant life was sprayed [on the lake],” in an attempt to rid the waters of pesky aquatic species including chara and pondweed.³⁵ Past attempts at keeping these aquatic weeds at bay had adversely affected the fish population, so foresters and local residents were wary of new chemical treatments. This particular herbicide, however, balanced its concentration of chemicals in proportion to the amount of water in the lake. The Indiana Department of Conservation chose to test the product thoroughly at Starve Hollow before allowing it to be sold commercially in Indiana.³⁶

In 1960, Starve Hollow tested and saw success with another method for aquatic weed control. By lowering the water level in the lake in the late fall, the shallow parts of the lake—where weeds and water lilies are most abundant—were exposed to the winter elements. Throughout the winter, the weeds and lilies were frozen and killed. When

³⁴ “Starve Hollow Lake on Jackson County State Forest is Filling,” *Outdoor Indiana*, January 1939, 4 & 30.; Indiana State Forests. Indiana Clipping File. *The State Forest Properties of the Indiana Department of Conservation*. Indiana State Library.

³⁵ “Starve Hollow Lake Subject of Chemical Treatment,” *Outdoor Indiana*, October 1952, 13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

springtime came again and the lake was back up to its desired water level, the weeds had not returned.³⁷

A Turn Toward Recreation

In 1959, a large beach area was added to the Starve Hollow Lake area, costing \$47,000, but providing even more recreational opportunities there.³⁸ According to an article from *Outdoor Indiana* in 1959, this 990-foot beach was, “the best and largest public beach found on a state forest property.”³⁹ This addition really sparked the recreational appeal of Starve Hollow, which would eventually blossom into a State Recreation Area sometime between 1985 and 1990.

As of 2015, the Starve Hollow State Recreation Area spans 280 acres and the lake itself covers 142 acres, offering many exciting amenities like fishing, hiking, mountain biking, swimming, and boating. The large sandy beach with convenient parking remains a popular attraction, as does the Education Center (Figure 18), where the public can learn about conservation from a full-time Interpretive Naturalist during the spring, summer, and fall.⁴⁰

³⁷ “New Method for Weed Control,” *Outdoor Indiana*, May 1960, 26.

³⁸ Indiana State Forests. Indiana Clipping File. “Starve Hollow State Beach, Schrader-Weaver Nature Preserve..., 4/79” Indiana State Library.

³⁹ “Jackson State Nursery and Jackson-Washington State Forest,” *Outdoor Indiana*, April 1959, 28-29.

⁴⁰ Indiana Department of Natural Resources, “Indiana Department of Natural Resources,” DNR: Jackson-Washington State Forest. Accessed January 15, 2015, <http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/4820.htm>.



Figure 18, *Starve Hollow Education Center*

Source: Silcox, 2015.

Of all of the attractions, however, forest officials tell that camping at Starve Hollow is the most popular: “If we didn’t have the camping, we wouldn’t have the numbers that we have,” Schneck says.⁴¹ The most in-demand camping facilities, the Rent-a-Camp Cabins, were first installed in 2012 and offer electricity, heat, air conditioning, and minimal furniture, sleeping four people each.⁴² “They’re hard to get on the weekends,” Schneck says, “Once May starts, just about every weekend will be full.”⁴³

Driftwood State Hatchery

In the late 1950s, nearly twenty years after Driftwood State Fish Hatchery’s construction by the WPA, the Indiana Division of Fish and Game was seeing a decline in demand for fish hatcheries. Farmers and other individuals no longer relied on the fish

⁴¹ Schneck interview.

⁴² Jackson Washington Newsletter, “The Beach-Nut,” April 2014.

⁴³ Schneck interview.

hatcheries to stock their private ponds. Seeing the downward trend, the Division repurposed the Driftwood State Hatchery in 1957 as a set of experimental ponds (although the facility is still labeled as a fish hatchery on most state maps).⁴⁴ The previous hatchery became the site of research to develop solutions to aquatic weeds and erosion in Indiana farm ponds, a function it continues to fulfill in 2015.⁴⁵

Tree Nurseries

A series of tree nurseries have come and gone from the Jackson-Washington and Starve Hollow state facilities over the years. In the 1930s, a 25-acre transplant nursery was located near the CCC camp in Jackson County State Forest, “where millions of young trees [were] grown for planting, either to aid in the control of erosion or [for] reforestation...”⁴⁶ This nursery began operating with the establishment of the forest and its trees were often brought from Clark State Forest to Jackson County. Here they would grow and either be sold to private buyers to establish windbreaks and forests or they would be transplanted to yet another state property to further mature and eventually be harvested for lumber.⁴⁷

In 1936, a second nursery was established just north of what would become Starve Hollow Lake. This nursery already exceeded the original nursery’s acreage with 28 acres of land and had the potential to expand to a total of 50 acres.⁴⁸ By March 1942, the nursery spanned over 30 acres, all under a sprinkler irrigation system, presumably pumping water from Starve Hollow Lake. The state nursery contained 2.5 million trees at this time, enough

⁴⁴ Woodrow Fleming, “Our New Fish Propagation Program,” *Outdoor Indiana*, July 1963, 8-11.

⁴⁵ Donald J. Leedy, “Farm Ponds Can Be Better,” *Outdoor Indiana*, August 1957, 4-6.

⁴⁶ “Jackson County State Forest Development Example of Indiana Program,” 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ “Development of State Forest in Jackson County is Progressing,” 8-9 & 27.

to plant 2,500 acres total.⁴⁹ As of September 1961, this Jackson-Washington State Forest Nursery was the second largest state nursery in Indiana, contributing to the statewide production of 6.8 million seedlings and transplants in the spring of 1961.⁵⁰

The final nursery near Jackson-Washington State Forest is Vallonia Nursery, the only one still operating as of 2015. The National Forest Service originally established Vallonia Nursery on 150-acres southwest of Starve Hollow in 1935.⁵¹ It remained under federal operation until 1965, when the U.S. Forest Service began leasing and turning the nursery's operations over to the Indiana Division of Forestry. In 1981, Indiana officially purchased the Vallonia State Nursery, which would expand by 88 acres four years later. In the late 2000s, Vallonia Nursery was one of two tree seedling nurseries operated by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR), contributing to a statewide production average of 3.6 million seedlings annually.⁵²

Washington County Expansion

The 1950s were an important time for Jackson County State Forest and Starve Hollow Lake in terms of land acquisition. In December 1952, it was announced that the state forest had acquired a significant tract of land and would be expanding into Washington County. This addition not only changed the forest's name to Jackson-

⁴⁹ "Bergson Family Visits Forests and Mr. McDaniels Likes Jackson County Sawtooths," *Outdoor Indiana*, March 1942, 7 & 22.

⁵⁰ Wilcox, Ralph F., "Plant More Trees." *Outdoor Indiana*, September 1961, 2-3.

⁵¹ "Jackson County State Forest is Visited by Newspaper Editors," 16 & 24.

⁵² Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry. *State of Indiana Nursery Program*, n.d.

Washington State Forest, but also expanded its borders by up to a total 3,000 acres on discontinuous land parcels.⁵³

The Hoosier Skyline Drive

One of the biggest projects in Jackson-Washington State Forest during the 1960s was the establishment of the Hoosier Skyline Drive (Figure 19). By this time, the forest had expanded to 10,492 acres, through which forest officials hoped to develop a scenic drive with views of the incredible Knobstone Escarpment of Brownstown.⁵⁴ An existing public access road that led to farmer's fields and orchards, was paved over and developed into the Hoosier Skyline Drive. It was likely the same road upon which over one hundred vehicles travelled during the forest's 1937 Open House.⁵⁵



Figure 19, *Skyline Drive*
Source: Boley, 1980.

⁵³ "State Forest Expanded into Washington County," *Outdoor Indiana*, December 1952, 5.

⁵⁴ Betty Bennett, "Our State Forests: Reservoirs Recreation," *Hoosier Motorist*, September-October 1964, 10-11.

⁵⁵ "Trailing this Issue," *Outdoor Indiana*, September-October 1991, 50-51.; "'Open House' at Jackson County State Forest Featured by Motor Tour to Points of Interest," 30.

The Skyline Drive reaches a 929-foot elevation at the top, where one can see some thirty to fifty miles away, into Jennings, Scott, Washington, and Clark counties. Visitors can witness the beautiful saw-tooth outline of the Brownstown Escarpment or “Knobs,” visible in all directions from the Skyline Drive (Figure 20). This term “knobs” describes the area’s numerous rounded peaks and ridges, some of which “terminate in the surrounding countryside, while others connect with adjoining peaks.”⁵⁶ Much, but not all of the Knobstone Escarpment, which runs northeast to southwest, is visible from the Skyline Drive. The southern block of the formation surrounds Starve Hollow Lake. Some of the well-known, visible knobs include: “Pinnacle Peak” (the highest point of the entire formation, located on the northeastern point of the forest at 966 feet above sea level), “Ball Knob,” (named for its common comparison to a halved basketball covered in trees), and “Sleeping Elephant.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ R.A. Brodhecker, “What Mountains are These?: The Skyline Drive,” *Outdoor Indiana*, June 1967, 24-26.

⁵⁷ Ibid.



Figure 20, *Views from Skyline Drive*
 Source: Pearson, 1976.

In the later 1960s, forest officials considered expanding the Skyline Drive westward to reach the sites of an old peach orchard, planted in the late 1890s by Enoch Baughman. These four- to eight-acre plateaus, known locally as the “Baughman Knobs,” offer similarly beautiful lookout points. Officials also considered expanding the drive further south to connect with Starve Hollow Lake.⁵⁸ Though the road was never expanded to make these orchard views more publicly available, as of 2015, visitors can take in the views by enjoying the mountain biking trails that circle the orchard plateaus.

In 1991, Property Manager John Friedrich told *Outdoor Indiana*, “Skyline Drive provides access to forage for mushrooms in the spring and berries in the summer, or to hunt for squirrel, grouse, and deer in the fall.”⁵⁹ Even progressing into the 21st century,

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Trailing this Issue,” 50-51.

Skyline Drive continues to attract locals and out-of-towners throughout the spring, summer, and fall seasons.

Knobstone Trail

During the later 1970s and 1980s, the DNR was interested in expanding Indiana's state recreational facilities, particularly through hiking trails. In 1979, for instance, 2,544 acres of Jackson-Washington State Forest were set aside as "Back Country" area, for primitive outdoor activities only, contributing to a total of 7,200 Back Country acres across the state.⁶⁰

Another large recreational development for the DNR at this time was the Knobstone Trail, a collaborative project between The Nature Conservancy, the Young Adult Conservation Corps, and the Indiana DNR Divisions of Fish and Wildlife, Forestry, and Outdoor Recreation. Planning for this trail began in 1975, under the recently formed Streams and Trails Section of the Division of Outdoor Recreation. The Division was reviewing state-owned land across Indiana, searching for opportunities to develop long-distance trails. According to an article in *Outdoor Indiana* in April 1981, "The possibility of a hiking trail in Clark, Scott, Washington, and Jackson Counties became readily evident. Furthermore, an extension through Jackson and Brown Counties into Monroe and Morgan Counties could even be considered a possibility...."⁶¹

In 1978, The Nature Conservancy acquired a large tract of land from a timber company, which could connect an existing trail in Clark State Forest with state owned properties in Washington County (specifically the Elk Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area

⁶⁰ NA, "Wright, Rank in BASS Classic: Third wild areas...", *The Indianapolis Star*, August 2, 1981.

⁶¹ Joe Payne, "32 Miles of Forest Hiking!: Knobstone Trail Reflections," *Outdoor Indiana*, April 1981, 5-9.

and the Jackson-Washington State Forest). Aware of the DNR's plans, The Nature Conservancy and the Cummins Foundation of Columbus sold the property to the state, making way for the 3-mile Washington County corridor of the soon-to-be Knobstone Trail. With this acquisition and the support of Governor Otis R. Bowen, the DNR received \$540,000 from the Indiana General Assembly in 1979 for the proposed trail.⁶²

As of April 1981, 32 miles of the Knobstone Trail were complete in Clark State Forest, with 68 more proposed through Jackson-Washington. Much of this work was completed by volunteer and environmentalist groups as well as the Young Adult Conservation Corps, a program for unemployed young people ages 16 to 23 (Figure 21).⁶³ By 1981, several other tracts of land from The Nature Conservancy had been acquired and the Washington County corridor was almost complete.⁶⁴



Figure 21, *Knobstone Trailblazers*
Source: Martin, 1991.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Michael Martin, "Volunteering to work on the Knobstone Trail: Knobstone Trailblazers," *Outdoor Indiana*, June 1991, 19-21.

⁶⁴ Payne, 5-9.

At this time, the DNR was also making plans to expand the Knobstone Trail to tie together the three sections of Jackson-Washington State Forest, creating a 100-mile hike. The DNR even considered doubling that mileage by joining the Knobstone Trail with the Hoosier National Forest, Brown County State Park, and Yellowwood and Morgan-Monroe State Forests. These plans were still being discussed in *Outdoor Indiana* in 1991, but additions to the trail have not yet come to be (as of 2015).⁶⁵ The Knobstone Trail does remain Indiana's longest footpath to date, however, covering 58 miles of backcountry through Clark State Forest, Elk Creek Public Fishing Area, and Jackson-Washington State Forest.⁶⁶

Looking Ahead

Jackson-Washington State Forest has evolved quite a bit since its inception in 1931. Many individuals and groups have helped to develop the forest into the beautiful public land that it is today, from Civilian Conservation Corps to the Indiana Division of Forestry to property managers like Brad Schneck. There have been years of massive growth and expansion for Jackson-Washington's property lines and years of stagnancy while the inner facilities were improved and developed. As much as Jackson-Washington State Forest has evolved, however, its main goal has remained the same: to protect part of our Hoosier state and its natural glory for long-term utilization as both a recreational and timber resource.

Forest officials maintain this goal through a multiple use forest management policy, which allows state forests to obtain maximum benefits from recreation, timber production, and wildlife and watershed protection. The policy prevents recreational development from

⁶⁵ Martin, 19-21.

⁶⁶ "Indiana Department of Natural Resources: Knobstone Trail – General Information," *Indiana Department of Natural Resources*, <http://www.in.gov/dnr/outdoor/4275.htm>.

ever taking precedence over conserving and protecting our natural resources. It also assures that recreational development is structured around the natural, existing environment, rather than a “built environment.”⁶⁷ Timber is still harvested from the state forests, however harvesting choices are made based on what is best for the forest’s health, not on profits.⁶⁸ In April, 2015, Jackson-Washington State Forest maintains nearly 18,000 acres of forest, recreational land, and bodies of water near Brownstown, Indiana.⁶⁹

For generations, Jackson-Washington State Forest has provided Hoosiers and visitors to the Hoosier state with a public space to enjoy all of Indiana’s natural beauty. Jackson-Washington and many of Indiana’s state forests offer visitors a unique combination of recreation, conservation education, and local history. Without these important state resources, there would have been far fewer projects for the CCC in Indiana, fewer protected natural lands, and fewer recreational opportunities today. Most importantly, Jackson-Washington protects the natural lands surrounding Brownstown, Indiana. As Brad Schneck put it, “First and foremost is sustainability, to ensure that what we *have* is here in the future.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Schneck interview.

⁶⁹ Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Accessed January 15, 2015.
<http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/4820.htm>

⁷⁰ Schneck interview.

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